

Environmental Management Systems for the Iowa Beef Feedlot Industry

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Introduction

The beef industry is of great importance to Iowa with over a million cattle on feed and nearly one million beef cows.

Because of the high concentration of livestock within the state, ground and surface water quality is of great interest and importance.

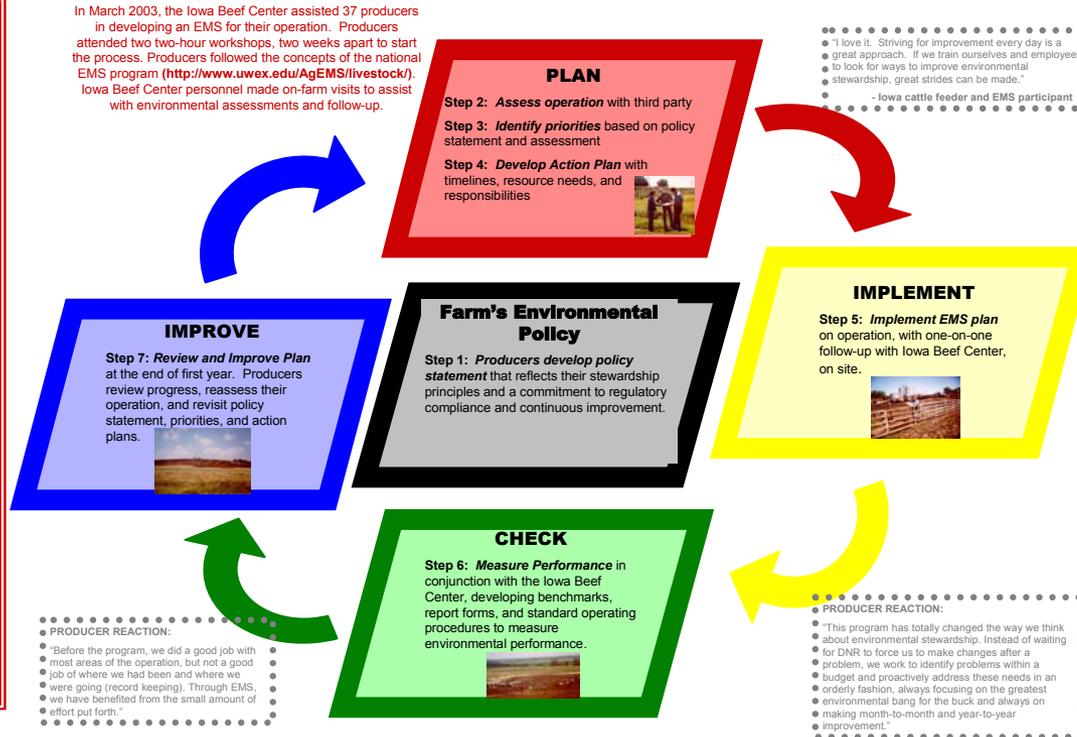
The Iowa Beef Center assisted producers in developing a functional Environmental Management System (EMS) for their operation to improve environmental and economic performance.

What is an EMS?

An EMS is an internationally-recognized business model that begins with an environmental policy statement, an objective assessment of the operation, and clearly defined objectives, all written by the producer.

This continuous process, following a practical approach of "Plan, Implement, Check, and Improve", provides a systematic approach to achieving regulatory compliance and their own stewardship goals, while enhancing business profits.

In March 2003, the Iowa Beef Center assisted 37 producers in developing an EMS for their operation. Producers attended two two-hour workshops, two weeks apart to start the process. Producers followed the concepts of the national EMS program (<http://www.uwex.edu/AgEMS/livestock/>). Iowa Beef Center personnel made on-farm visits to assist with environmental assessments and follow-up.



Results

Participants were surveyed in December to evaluate their progress in developing an EMS and the changes they have made in their operation.

Table 1. 19 producers responded to a survey nine months after the initial EMS workshop, with the following responses:

Continuing with EMS: **17 producers**

Completed policy statement: **91%**

Shared policy statement with others: **60%**

Referred to policy statement in previous 3 months: **73%**

Developed action plan to address a priority: **77%**

Completed one or more on priority: **81%**

Table 2. Percentage change in the number of farms that have or plan to implement practice as part of EMS:

Analyze manure for nutrients : **100%**

Change manure application location or rate: **58%**

Built clean water diversions: **120%**

Built solid settling structures: **200%**

For more information, contact the Iowa Beef Center at www.iowabeefcenter.org or by calling (515)294-BEEF.

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